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First, cholesterol is a nutrient in foods. It is a hormone precursor and so it is found especially in animal foods. However, cholesterol is also manufactured in our bodies besides what we eat. In fact, 80% of cholesterol in our body is internally produced by the liver;<sup>7</sup> and this endogenous production is directly related to levels of stress. When we are under stress, our metabolism gears up. The orders for such gearing up are dependent upon hormonal regulation and many important hormones are synthesized from cholesterol. This is evidenced by the fact that many hormones have steroid or sterol in their name, such as the corticosteroids. This is the same sterol as in cholesterol. The corticosteroids are manufactured in the adrenal cortex sitting on top of the kidneys. These corticosteroids are often referred to as fight or flight hormones. They are the hormones most closely associated with stress reactions in the body. Their manufacture is part of the body's coping mechanism for dealing with stresses of all kinds. What this means is that anything which stresses the body can cause an elevation in cholesterol production as a precursor to producing corticosteroids.

This means that high serum cholesterol levels are not simply a matter of high dietary cholesterol. A person's cholesterol is also a function of their level of stress. Eating sugar, drinking coffee and tea, and drinking alcohol are all stressful to the adrenal glands. From a Chinese medical point of view, coffee, tea, and alcohol liberate a lot of yang qi. Therefore, the body's response is to try to secrete more yin substance. Cholesterol is one such yin substance which becomes pathologic when excessive. Sugar, on the other hand, directly causes the secretion of yin dampness or pathologic substance.

Although eating a diet high in saturated fats can also cause the body to accumulate dampness and phlegm or pathologic yin substance, it is usually not necessary to become fanatical about avoiding all foods containing cholesterol. For instance, eggs have gotten a very bad rap lately because of their high cholesterol content. Chinese medicine believes that

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<sup>7</sup> Cholesterol, Hypertension, and Stress, [http://www.drlam.com/A3R\\_brief\\_in\\_doc\\_format/2000-No6-Cholesterol.cfm](http://www.drlam.com/A3R_brief_in_doc_format/2000-No6-Cholesterol.cfm), last retrieved 2/5/2008

eggs are a very nutritious food. Specifically, they are a yin supplement. If a person is able to keep their level of stress under control and avoids sugar, alcohol, coffee, and tea, I believe they can eat a modicum of eggs and certainly more than many people think presently.

I have seen a number of patients with high cholesterol who were on very low cholesterol, restrictive diets and still could not get their cholesterol down. Within weeks after eliminating refined sugars and refined carbohydrates from their diets, all of these patients have been able to reduce their cholesterol levels to within safe limits. At that point, they were able to add back into their diet a modicum of cholesterol-containing foods, such as eggs, and their cholesterol did not increase as long as they avoided sugar.

Therefore, although I agree that one should not eat too many saturated fats, fatty meats, or too many eggs, avoiding sugar and sweets and reducing stress are equally important in maintaining healthy serum cholesterol levels. In Chinese medical terms, cholesterol is a pure yin substance associated with the kidney essence. However, when excessive, it becomes a pathologic yin composed of dampness and phlegm. Therefore, the key to keeping it under healthy control is to keep yang from becoming overly stressed and yin from being excessively produced.

*... although I agree that one should not eat too many saturated fats, fatty meats, or too many eggs, avoiding sugar and sweets and reducing stress are equally important in maintaining healthy serum cholesterol levels.*

## Food Allergies

Food allergies are a common diagnosis among Westerners and especially those who seek their health care from so-called alternative practitioners, such as chiropractors, naturopaths, and homeopaths. In Chinese medicine there is no such disease category as food allergies. That is not to say there are no food allergies but that Chinese medicine does not traditionally categorize the signs and symptoms of such allergies as a distinct disease. In part this is because, in my experience, Chinese are far less prone to food allergies than Westerners.<sup>8</sup> I believe this is so, exactly because traditional Chinese dietary sense is so much better in general than contemporary Western dietary sense. Most Chinese know more about the good and bad effects of food and know better how to eat healthily than most Westerners. Therefore, they have less problems due to eating the wrong foods at the wrong time.

<sup>8</sup> While this may have been true when this book was first written, it may not be true now. This is because of China's rapid development with both increased consumption of sugars and sweets, increased use of antibiotics, and increased use of corticosteroids.

Most food allergies begin in infancy where our current Western lack of nutritional sense is most glaring and apparent. Chinese medical theory states that the child's spleen or their digestion is immature until approximately six years of age. When a person is a beginner at something with undeveloped skills and abilities, we normally recognize the need to start off slowly and easily until one develops the requisite skills and abilities. Babies need to be fed "beginner's" foods. That means mother's milk, watered down cereal soups, mashed, cooked vegetables, and small amounts of animal soups and broths. Instead, we ply our infants with cold fruit juices, raw carrots, apples, oranges, cheese, fried foods and chips, peanut butter, and cold milk and sweetened yogurt out of the refrigerator.

As we have seen in the preceding chapters, such foods are very dampening and relatively hard to digest. These foods may be very nutritious for a grownup with a strong digestion, but they are very difficult to digest for a child below the age of six. Nonetheless, this is standard fare at most daycare centers and is all too often what our children are given at home. Because these things are damp and hard-to-digest, they further impair the digestion and tend to cause phlegm and dampness which clog the system. When the flow of qi and blood which are inherently warm get blocked by phlegm and dampness, this heat is transferred to the pathologic accumulations thus causing damp heat and hot phlegm.

Most food allergies manifest according to Chinese medicine as some version of spleen vacuity with heat and/or dampness and phlegm. It is no wonder then that the foods which are most prone to causing food allergies are those which are the most dampening and phlegmatic. In a study conducted by Dr. Frederic Speer on 1,000 patients, he found that milk, chocolate, cola, citrus, corn, and egg were the most common food allergens.

- **Milk** allergies are especially common in children under two. Milk is very dampening according to Chinese dietary theory. Therefore, milk, cheese, and all dairy products tend to aggravate dampness and impede the spleen. If one's digestion is sound, these are very nutritious foods, but it is their very nutritiousness which also causes them to be dampening if one has insufficient spleen qi to distill their dampness.
- **Chocolate**, which is extremely bitter, is rarely eaten alone. It is usually eaten in combination with sugar and tropical, hydrogenated oils. Chocolate by itself is warm and supplements the life-gate fire. When eaten with oils and sugars which are extremely dampening, chocolate tends to foster damp heat within the body. Again, this is es-

pecially the case with children whose digestion is not capable of moving and transforming so much dampness and sweets.

- Cola is made from a combination of sugars and spices, including cinnamon, orange peel, and vanilla. These spices are warm and when eaten with foods are actually digestive aids. However, when taken with sugar water which overwhelms the baby's spleen, they too tend to cause damp heat.
- Citrus fruits and juices are sweet and sour. These are the two flavors which in combination tend to be the most dampening according to Chinese five phase theory. Drinking the concentrated essence of oranges, grapefruits, pineapples, and lemons is like mainlining pathogenic dampness. This is especially the case in infants whose yang qi is still struggling to organize and permeate the dampness of their unstructured yin substance.
- Corn is sweet with a level or neutral temperature according to Chinese medicine. It is this neutral temperature which makes corn difficult to digest in the newborn besides its tough exterior and the baby's lack of teeth. Because corn lacks its own warmth and yet tends to be dampening because of its sweetness, and since the baby's spleen yang or warmth is weak, this dampness engendered by corn is difficult for the baby to transport and transform.
- Eggs are likewise highly nutritious. They have a lot of *wei* or flavor as compared to qi. They are a wet, mucousy food which supplements yin and blood. This all adds up to a propensity to be dampening if one's fire of digestion does not burn strongly.
- Other foods which cause food allergies and especially in children are **soy products**. Soybeans are sweet like corn but even cooler. They are quite dampening according to Chinese dietary theory. On the one hand, that makes them nutritious, but, on the other, that makes them hard to digest.

If one is fed or allowed to eat the wrong foods as a child, this can cause chronic spleen dampness and weakness. In Chinese medicine, it is said that dampness is heavy and turbid and hard to resolve. Once pathologic dampness is engendered in the spleen and body as a whole, it is difficult to rid. Therefore, dampness and phlegm engendered as a child may persist into adulthood, especially if one continues to eat the wrong, i.e., damp

and difficult to digest, foods. When such foods are eaten, they cause even more dampness and possibly heat and the signs and symptoms of allergy appear.

Although Chinese medicine has no category of disease called food allergies, its theory nonetheless explains why certain people experience certain signs and symptoms when they eat certain foods. Allergenic foods almost without exception tend to be dampening and hard-to-digest. If one has such a food allergy, it is important to identify the worst offending foods and avoid these. At the same time, a warm, digestion-benefitting diet should be eaten to strengthen the spleen and transform and eliminate chronic dampness. It may take a seemingly long time, but eventually it is possible to strengthen the spleen and eliminate dampness to the point that a moderate amount of the previously allergenic foods can be added back into the diet. However, it should be noted that such highly nutritious, dampening foods should not be eaten too frequently nor in too large amounts by anyone. They are immoderate foods which tend to be too yin to eat too much of.

## Candidiasis

Many Westerners suffer from candidiasis.<sup>9</sup> Candidiasis is an overgrowth of intestinal yeast. *Candida albicans* are a normal, saprophytic yeast which live in the large intestine and act as scavengers metabolizing debris. However, if they proliferate out of control and if the lining of the intestines becomes too permeable, these yeasts can infiltrate and migrate throughout the body. They can cause cystitis and vaginitis, sinusitis, thrush, skin diseases, and a host of other problems. Even if they just stay in the guts, they can cause chronic indigestion, flatulence, constipation or loose stools, fatigue, malaise, and depression. In addition, overgrowth of *Candida albicans* can cause imbalance in the endocrine system. The endocrine system regulates the hormones and endocrine imbalance can disrupt the menstrual cycle in women causing PMS, early periods, and dysmenorrhea. The endocrine system also regulates the immune system and, therefore, candidiasis can play a very important role in chronic infectious diseases, various viral diseases, and in cancer.

Chinese medicine does recognize the existence of *Candida albicans*. Chinese medicine says that this parasite, or *gu chong* (蟲虫) in Chinese, lives in the intestines and stomach.

<sup>9</sup> Since originally writing this book, candidiasis is not as common a diagnosis. Instead, leaky-gut syndrome and intestinal dysbiosis have taken its place. However, the manifestations of these conditions are essentially the same as what was more popularly called candidiasis. Therefore, most of what appears here also applies to these more contemporaneously popular diagnoses.

Further, Chinese medicine believes that it is great spleen vacuity along with excessive dampness and heat which provides the environment for runaway proliferation of such *gu chong*. In Chinese medicine, candidiasis is always associated with spleen dampness and weakness with a tendency to damp heat. As we have seen above, dampness is caused by overeating foods which weaken the spleen and engender too much dampness. This includes sugar and refined carbohydrates and citrus fruits and juices. Damp heat *per se* is aggravated by alcohol which is both damp and hot.

*In Chinese medicine, candidiasis is always associated with spleen dampness and weakness with a tendency to damp heat. As we have seen above, dampness is caused by overeating foods which weaken the spleen and engender too much dampness.*

Once one has candidiasis, it is important to stay away from eating any foods which tend to be spleen-weakening, damp-engendering, or damp heat-fostering. Also, one should avoid foods contaminated by yeast and fungus. This includes all fermented foods, all yeasted baked goods, and anything with vinegar in it. Foods fermented with acidophilus, such as miso, are usually alright. However, because yogurt is made with milk and is, therefore, dampening, it may be contraindicated in certain individuals. If one has a bad case of candidiasis, fungicidal medicines, whether these be herbal, pharmaceutical or homeopathic, are often necessary. Some authorities suggest a high protein diet but this may aggravate dampness and heat. Therefore, it is best to eat the basic healthy Chinese maintenance diet described in Chapter 3 but being careful to avoid all yeasted and fermented foods and all dampening, spleen-weakening foods. This means an emphasis on cooked vegetables and complex carbohydrates supplemented by some lean, animal protein.

Other useful books for the lay reader on candidiasis include William G. Crook's *The Yeast Connection* and Trowbridge & Walker's *The Yeast Syndrome*.

## Coffee

In Chinese medicine, coffee is classified as a bitter, acrid, and warm exterior-resolving medicinal. Exterior-resolvers are basically diaphoretics. These medicinals work by transforming kidney yin or essence into qi which is then liberated upward and outward through the system. As these move outward through the body's various energetic layers, they flood the organs within these layers with yang qi and so one experiences increased energy. In addition, this yang qi moving upward and outward promotes the flow of all the qi of the body, liberating stuck qi and with it activating blood and body fluids.

People who are either producing less qi from their daily diet, are using more qi through hyperactivity than they make each day, fail to store the qi they make because of disturbed sleep, or who lack access to their qi because of its being bound up or stagnant will all experience temporary access to abundant qi and the sense of energy and flow that go along with that when they drink coffee. However, because coffee is warm by nature, it tends to heat the stomach. This results in coffee's causing hot loose stools in many people with an attendant loss of spleen qi. Because coffee stimulates the lungs' participation in the downward transportation of body fluids to the bladder, it is also a diuretic. Each time we urinate, we lose qi since urine does not just dribble out but is transported. This means that we also lose warmth since qi is yang and, therefore, warm. Such diuresis weakens kidney yang at the same time as coffee steals kidney yin or essence.

*When coffee was first introduced into Europe, there were prohibition movements and laws based on the recognition that coffee is a powerful and not wholly benign drug. Although coffee has certain legitimate medical and emergency uses, its use as a daily beverage is not very wise.*

Coffee, therefore, has a debilitating effect on both the middle and lower burners. Spleen qi is lost and kidney yin and yang are exhausted. Using coffee as an energy boost is like continually dipping into one's savings or capital. Eventually such profligate deficit spending leaves one's internal economy bankrupt. When coffee transforms and liberates essence qi, one gets a rush but ultimately loses that precious stored energy. When coffee was first introduced into Europe, there were prohibition movements and laws based on the recognition that coffee is a powerful and not wholly benign drug. Although coffee has certain legitimate medical and emergency uses, its use as a daily beverage is not very wise. It is my belief that if coffee were to be introduced to the

West today as a new discovery, governmental agencies, such as the FDA in the United States, would restrict its use as a controlled substance. Since the government of the United States cannot, due to economic pressures, outlaw cigarette smoking which has incontestably been shown to be linked to lung cancer, it is even less likely that this common beverage could be prohibited at this late date. However, except as a medicinal and in cases where the use of speed is warranted knowing full well the risks its use entails, I believe coffee has no place in the everyday diet of those hoping to be healthy.

Women especially do well to avoid coffee. Because of the violent upward dispersal coffee initiates in the body, it seems to injure the *chong mai* (冲脉) or so-called penetrating vessel. The *chong mai* is an energy pathway running up the very core of the body con-

necting the kidneys to the heart. The purpose of this pathway is to feed kidney yang to the heart where it is transformed into the light of consciousness or *shen ming* (神明). It also leads kidney yin upwards to provide the nourishment and substantial support for the “higher” activities of consciousness and sensation. In injuring this connection between above and below, heart and kidneys, and exhausting yin, blood, and righteous body fluids, coffee tends to cause accumulations in women’s breasts above and in their pelvises below. Although controlled tests have so far not confirmed this fact, their results are, in my opinion, due to a flaw in their design and logic, since every astute clinician knows from experience that coffee negatively affects women’s breasts and reproductive organs.

## Nutritional Supplements

When I first began practicing Chinese medicine, I, like most converts to a new belief system, strove to hew to a very pure, traditional Chinese practice. I perceived things like Western vitamin and mineral supplements as incompatible with such a pure, traditional approach. This was in the face of the fact that Chinese practitioners of Chinese medicine do not have any problem with using vitamin and mineral supplements. At that time, I confused Chinese medicine as a system of thought with medicines which come from China. These are not necessarily the same thing.

In Chinese medicine, probably as much as 20% of the standard repertoire of 500 medicinal substances originated outside of China. Spices such as cardamon, cloves, nutmeg, and cinnamon came from southeast and southwest Asia and the Spice Islands. Apricot, peach, and prune pits came from Central Asia and the Mideast. Licorice came from southern Russia. Cinchona bark came from the Andes. Eagleswood, saffron, and terminalia came from India and the Himalayas. And American ginseng and greater celandine came from the United States and Canada.

In addition, Chinese medicinals (*yao*, 药) are not all herbal (*cao*, 草) in origin. Rather they come from all three kingdoms—animal, vegetable, and mineral. Further, Chinese doctors did not and do not only use naturally occurring medicinal substances found in their raw form. Chinese doctors and pharmacists have for centuries studied and employed a host of processing and refining techniques in order to make their medicinals more powerful and concentrated with less side effects and toxicity. So-called Chinese herbal medicine was largely the product of Daoist alchemists who were also the progenitors of the science of chemistry.

Therefore, there is no Chinese precedent for thinking that a practitioner of so-called Chinese medicine must only prescribe medicinals which originate in China, medicinals originating from vegetable or herbal sources, or naturally occurring substances in their raw or unprocessed form. That means there is no *a priori* reason vitamins and minerals cannot be incorporated into the contemporary practice of Chinese medicine.

When vitamins, minerals, amino acids, enzymes, coenzymes, fatty acids, and co-factors are used medicinally, these are referred to as orthomolecular supplements. Orthomolecular means the same molecules as the body itself. Orthomolecular supplements are essentially concentrations of nutrient substances normally found in the foods we eat. Many people ask, if vitamins and minerals are simply found in the foods we eat, why can't we get enough of these in our daily diet? That is a good question and one which can be easily answered.

First of all, many people in the West do not eat a healthy and balanced diet. We tend not to eat enough fresh vegetables and we tend to eat too much sugar, protein, and fats. These foods cause us to use up inordinate amounts of certain other nutrients. For instance, if one eats lots of meat, one needs more calcium. And sugar causes us to use up more zinc.

Secondly, many of the foods we eat are grown in poor soil due to excessive use of chemical fertilizers and other modern but shortsighted farming practices. This is compounded by the fact that many people today eat foods which have been prepared and stored by canning, freezing, and dehydrating which cause some loss of vitamins and enzymes.

*Fourth, most of us living in urban environments are subject to large amounts of mental and emotional stress. It is my belief that simply living in the urban West is more than our nervous systems are capable of dealing with in a healthy way.*

Third, we are exposed to toxic chemicals in our air, water, and food which are a type of extra stress on our systems requiring extra nutrients to neutralize these.

Fourth, most of us living in urban environments are subject to large amounts of mental and emotional stress. It is my belief that simply living in the urban West is more than our nervous systems are capable of dealing with in a healthy way. There are just too many and unrelieved stresses which are constantly assaulting us. Such stress uses up inordinate amounts of B vitamins and minerals.

Fifth, if one drinks coffee or alcohol, smokes cigarettes, is exposed to radiation, is taking certain medications, such as oral birth control pills, or is suffering from a chronic illness, and especially a digestive complaint, any one of these is using up abnormally large amounts of certain nutrients or is not absorbing others from their food.

For all these reasons, one may need to supplement certain nutrients which are not adequately found in their diet. This does not mean that if one gobbles lots of vitamins one does not need to eat a healthy diet. What it does mean is that, given the stressful, polluted world we live in, we may not be getting enough vital nutrients simply from our diet.

Over the last dozen years, I have attempted to develop preliminary Chinese medical descriptions of all the common vitamins, minerals, and amino acids. Using these descriptions, Western practitioners of Chinese medicine might prescribe orthomolecular supplements based on a Chinese medical diagnosis just as if they were prescribing Chinese herbs. Although this is not something I suggest laypersons do for themselves, I have included this brief discussion of orthomolecular supplements in this layperson's guide to Chinese dietary therapy primarily to let patients know that such supplements are consistent with the practice of Chinese medicine. They are a useful adjunct to other, more standard Chinese medical therapies and should not be overlooked simply because they are not "Chinese." These descriptions emphasize that Chinese medicine is more a system of thinking about health and disease than a collection of exotic treatments from the Far East.

## Chinese Medical Functions of Vitamins

**Vitamin A:** Supplements the blood and fills the essence, brightens the eyes and clears heat from the blood; treats vacuity heat patterns.

**Vitamin B1:** Courses the liver and rectifies the qi, fortifies the spleen and dries dampness, stops pain.

**Vitamin B2:** Nourishes the liver and supplements the kidneys, engenders fluids and boosts the stomach.

**Vitamin B3:** Soothes the liver and harmonizes the stomach, fortifies the spleen and clears heat from the stomach, upbears the clear and frees the flow of the qi mechanism.

**Vitamin B5:** Courses the liver and rectifies the qi, clears heat and resolves depression, supplements the spleen and harmonizes the stomach.

**Vitamin B6:** Courses the liver and rectifies the qi, clears heat and resolves depression, harmonizes wood and earth, clears heat from the stomach and damp heat from the gallbladder.

**Vitamin B12:** Supplements the qi and nourishes the blood, stops bleeding.

**Vitamin B15:** Rectifies and moves the qi, quickens the blood and transforms stasis.

**Biotin:** Nourishes the blood and emolliates the liver, supplements the heart and quiets the spirit.

**Choline:** Nourishes the blood and extinguishes wind, strengthens the sinews and bones, moistens the intestines and frees the flow of the stool.

**Folic acid:** Nourishes the blood and harmonizes the liver, quiets the spirit and the fetus.

**Inositol:** Nourishes the blood, moistens the intestines, and quiets the spirit.

**PABA:** Supplements the liver and kidneys, moistens the intestines and frees the flow of the stool, dispels wind, blackens the hair, and retards aging.

**Vitamin C:** Clears heat and stops bleeding, clears heat and resolves toxins, clears heat from the heart and quiets the spirit.

**Vitamin D:** Supplements the kidneys and invigorates yang, strengthens the sinews and bones, brightens the eyes and quiets the fetus.

**Vitamin E:** Nourishes the blood and supplements yang, strengthens the sinews and bones.

**Vitamin K:** Secures and astringes the lungs and large intestine, stops bleeding.

**Bioflavonoids:** Clears heat from the blood and stops bleeding, quickens the blood and transforms stasis.

**Beta-carotene:** Courses the liver and rectifies the qi, clears heat and resolves toxins, disperses stagnations and accumulations, combats cancer.

## Chinese Medical Functions of Minerals

**Calcium:** Astringes yin and suppresses yang, strengthens the bones and promotes the generation of new tissue, absorbs acid and stops pain.

**Chromium:** Fortifies the spleen and boosts the qi, supplements the qi and blood.

**Cobalt:** Supplements the qi to transform blood.

**Copper:** Fortifies the spleen and seeps dampness, clears and eliminates damp heat.

**Flourine:** Supplements the kidneys and enriches yin, strengthens the bones and teeth.

**Iodine:** Courses the liver and rectifies the qi, clears heat and scatters nodulation.

**Iron:** Clears heat and cools the blood, quickens the blood and transforms stasis.

**Magnesium:** Astringes yin and suppresses yang, quiets the spirit, absorbs acid, and stops pain.

**Manganese:** Nourishes the liver and enriches the kidneys, strengthens the sinews and bones, sharpens the hearing.

**Molybdenum:** Nourishes the blood and enriches yin, clears heat and cools the blood.

**Phosphorus:** Supplements the kidneys and enriches yin, strengthens the sinews and bones.

**Potassium:** Fortifies the spleen and seeps dampness, clears heat and expels pus, dispels wind dampness, clears and eliminates damp heat.

**Selenium:** Astringes yin and suppresses yang, quiets the spirit and brightens the eyes.

**Silica:** Supplements the kidneys and strengthens the bones.

**Silicon:** Supplements the liver and kidneys and strengthens the sinews and bones.

**Sodium:** Supplements the liver and kidneys and secures the essence, softens hardness and scatters nodulation.

**Sulfur:** Supplements the kidneys and warms yang, blackens the hair and benefits the skin.

**Zinc:** Nourishes the liver and enriches the kidneys, strengthens the bones and brightens the eyes.

## Chinese Medical Functions of Amino Acids

**Alanine:** Fortifies the spleen and boosts the qi, nourishes the heart and quiets the spirit.

**Arginine:** Supplements the kidneys and invigorates yang, moistens the intestines and frees the flow of the stool, strengthens the sinews and bones and dispels wind cold dampness.

**BCAA** (Leucine, Isoleucine & Valine): Supplements the kidneys and enriches yin.

**Carnitine:** Supplements the blood and yin.

**Cysteine:** Nourishes the liver and enriches the kidneys, clears heat and cools the blood, clears heat and resolves toxins, blackens the hair and promotes the generation of new tissue.

**Glutamic acid:** Supplements the kidneys and enriches yin.

**Glutathione:** Clears heat and resolves toxins, clears heat and cools the blood, promotes lactation.

**Glycine:** Supplements the blood and promotes the growth of new tissue.

**Histidine:** Supplements the blood and yin, may clear heat and cool the blood.

**Lysine:** Supplements the blood and yin, may clear heat and resolve toxins.

**Methionine:** Nourishes and cools the blood, soothes the liver and quiets the spirit.

**Ornithine:** Supplements yang.

**Phenylalanine:** Resolves the exterior and clears heat, clears heat and resolves toxins, moves the qi and stops pain.

**Taurine:** Clears heat and resolves toxins, drains the liver and clears damp heat from the gallbladder; promotes lactation.

**Threonine:** Nourishes the blood and extinguishes wind, soothes the liver and relieves tension and contractions.

**Tryptophan:** Courses the liver and resolves depression, quickens the blood and transforms stasis, quiets the spirit and stops pain.

**Tyrosine:** Courses the liver and rectifies the qi, harmonizes wood and earth.

Because the basic methodology of Chinese medicine is to prescribe the equal opposite force necessary to bring a person back into healthy balance, if one knows that they are too hot, then taking vitamin C makes perfect sense according to the logic of Chinese medicine. Conversely, because vitamin C is cold and clears heat, taking too much of it can damage the spleen and lead to spleen vacuity loose stools and diarrhea. In the same way, one can decide on who should take what amounts of the above vitamins, minerals, and amino acids. Because vitamin and mineral supplements

provide very concentrated doses of these ingredients, I believe they should be regarded as medicinals rather than as foods. This means that they should be prescribed with the same care and thought as any other medicinal, be that a Chinese herb or Western pharmaceutical. If something is strong enough to bring a person back to balance when necessary, then that same thing must also be strong enough to push a person out of balance when unnecessary or inappropriate. You can't have it both ways. So the stronger a medicinal is, the more care should be exercised in its choice and use.

The beauty of Chinese medicine is that, using its system of prescribing, one can tell exactly who needs what medicines in what amounts. Thus Chinese medicine, when correctly practiced, provides healing without side effects. Each person gets just the right treatment for their individual needs. This is exactly what makes Chinese medicine the safe and effective system of medicine it is and why it provides such a wonderful alternative and complement to modern Western medicine which tends to prescribe the same medicine for all persons with the same disease. Since each person is different from every other person, no one medicine, or nutritional supplement is going to be right for every person even with the same disease. And that is why one gets side effects.



When originally writing this book on Chinese dietary therapy, I coincidentally came across two things which I think support and underscore the importance of this approach. The first is a scientific study that compared the eating habits of 6,500 rural Chinese and their health with Western eating habits and Westerners' health. This study was undertaken jointly by Oxford University in England, the Chinese Academy for Preventive Medicine in Beijing, and Cornell University in the United States. It was called the Cornell-China-Oxford Project on Nutrition, Health and Environment and was the largest study of a nation's eating habits of this kind ever undertaken up to then. For two years, the subjects, aged 34-64, were interviewed about their eating and other health habits, such as drinking alcohol and smoking tobacco. Blood samples were taken to measure their cholesterol and other such things, dietary records were obtained, and foods consumed were weighed and measured. Ninety percent of the Chinese selected for this study were provincials who ate locally raised foods and stuck to a traditional diet. Among the important findings were the facts that:

1. Rural Chinese, at that time, consumed many more vegetables, grains, and fruits than either Americans or Britons.
2. The daily fiber intake of the average rural Chinese was three times higher than the average American.

3. The average rural Chinese derived anywhere from 6-24% of their daily calories from fat compared to 39% for the average American and 45% for the average Briton.
4. In most of the Chinese counties included in this study, people ate meat only once per week. In counties where meat was eaten more regularly, rates of cardiovascular disease were higher.
5. The Chinese in this study ate more total calories daily per pound of body weight than did their American counterparts but there was little obesity, certainly far less than in the U.S.
6. The average rural Chinese blood cholesterol level was only 127 milligrams per deciliter compared to 212 milligrams in the U.S.
7. The rates for chronic degenerative diseases at that time were much higher in the U.S. than in China. However, in those areas of China where the intake of animal-based foods was higher, so were the rates for these kinds of diseases.

I believe this study supports the fact that the Chinese do, or at least did have a special insight into diet and the maintenance of health. Based on the outcomes of this study, the Chinese government is currently taking active steps to keep this traditional diet from giving way to the high fat diet of the West.

The second piece of interesting evidence supporting the wisdom of the Chinese medical approach to healthy eating was published in *Newsweek* (May 27, 1991). The cover article of this issue was devoted to new attitudes about diet and health in the United States. According to that article, the USDA had created what it called the "Eating Right Pyramid." This was a graphic showing, in its preparers' opinion, the most healthy proportions of foods in one's daily diet. This pyramid made grains and complex carbohydrates the foundation of the diet. Next came vegetables and fruits. Then came dairy products and other animal proteins, and last, under the heading "Use Sparingly," came fats, oils, and sweets. This is very similar to the diet that Chinese medicine also suggests is the healthiest for most humans living in temperate climates. The only change I would make in this scheme is that I would emphasize more vegetables,

since, as a clinician, I know that even those Westerners trying to eat a healthy diet tend to eat too many grain products and too few vegetables. The same article quotes Bonnie Liebman, a nutritionist at the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), as saying: "For years, the National Academy of Sciences and the National Cancer Institute have been telling Americans to eat more vegetables." Says CSPI's Liebman, "Most of the meal should be grains, vegetables, and beans, and meats should be used as a condiment." Unfortunately but all too typically, then Secretary of Agriculture, Edward R. Madigan, suspended the publication of this chart presumably due to special interest pressure from the meat and dairy industries.

For sure, some "truths" are culturally limited. Certain mores and behavior may work in one culture or country but not in others. However, I have practiced Chinese medicine in Asia, America, and Europe, and I believe that Chinese medicine is a system of thought about human physiology which is so universally valid that its logic can be applied to any person within any culture in the world. Chinese internal medicine is not simply a collection of medicinals which happen to have originated in China, nor is Chinese dietary therapy limited to wontons and egg drop soup. The fundamental insights of Chinese dietary theory can be applied to any national or regional cuisine since all foods in everyone's stomachs must be turned into 100° F soup.

*I have practiced Chinese medicine in Asia, America, and Europe, and I believe that Chinese medicine is a system of thought about human physiology which is so universally valid that its logic can be applied to any person within any culture in the world.*

Although more and more, Western science supports the diet rural Chinese have been eating for millennia, the facts of Western science are not something immediately experienced on a human level. Cholesterol, enzymes, proteins, etc. are so removed from everyday experience, that people are prone to unconsciously dismiss them even if, theoretically, they know about them. For most people, these facts exist only as vague abstractions. Chinese medicine, on the other hand, has crafted its theories from metaphors taken from everyday reality. This is based on the perception that whatever goes on within the body is not something apart or fundamentally different from what goes on in the world at large.

Chinese medicine is based on the concept that the human organism is a microcosm of the larger, external macrocosm. As a holographic part of this macrocosm, one can

apply the same everyday metaphors one uses to understand the world at large to their own insides. Therefore, the analogies between digestion and a pot on a stove, to a car engine, to a still, and to Economics 101 are both accurate and empowering if seemingly simplistic. My experience as a clinician is that such explanations are able to influence the behavior of patients that more abstract explanations often cannot. It is my experience that when we really understand something as being immediately and undeniably true, we tend to act upon that belief.

Chinese dietary therapy gives us a set of explanations from our normal, everyday world. These explanations make sense and, more than that, when they are put into action, they work. As a human being and as a doctor, there are many things which I say I believe but really do not know for sure. But, when it comes to diet, I do know for sure that the wisdom of Chinese dietary therapy does work. I also know that diet is such an important part of our daily life that, unless one's diet is well-adjusted, no amount of herbs, acupuncture, or other medicines or treatments can achieve a complete and lasting cure. Therefore, whether for prevention or remedial treatment, proper diet is of the utmost importance, and dietary wisdom is something that everyone needs to know. Chinese medicine has that wisdom and I am offering it to you. Good luck and *bon appétit*.



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